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25 January 1969

NSC REVIEW
COMPLETED

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: NSC Review Group Meeting, 23 January 1969

1. The first meeting of the NSC Review Group was held in the White House Situation Room on 23 January under the chairmanship of Henry Kissinger. Others in attendance as regular members of the Review Group were Dick Pederson, Department of State; Paul Warnke, Department of Defense; Lt. General William Rosson, Joint Staff; and Haakon Lindjord, Office of Emergency Preparedness. In addition, Morton Halperin, Helmut Sonnenfeldt and Spurgeon Keeny--all members of the White House Staff; General Andrew Goodpaster, temporary advisor to Kissinger; Hugh Ryan, U. S. Information Agency; and Samuel DePalma, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

2. The first part of the meeting was devoted to a description by Kissinger of the functions of the NSC Review Group. He described it as being essentially like the NSC Planning Board of the Eisenhower administration but with the primary task of presenting papers on major policy issues to the NSC in such form that choices could be made among feasible alternatives. He made a sharp distinction between policy exploration and operational decisions. He said the Review Group would deal only with the policy issues and leave operational decisions to the appropriate departments. The fundamental role of the Review Group is to

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select, on the basis of the best information and judgment available, those issues appropriate for NSC decision and to present those issues in a format which would facilitate choices among options.

3. Kissinger placed considerable emphasis on the President's desire for secrecy regarding all NSC discussions. The President wishes to have a free give-and-take during NSC meetings and wishes not to be restrained by fear of leaks or public discussions of views expressed. He wishes to keep secret even the subjects under discussion. Regarding Review Group meetings, Kissinger at first urged that the information be handled as NoDis is now handled. In the subsequent discussion he was made aware that the various agencies could not perform their tasks without providing dissemination to IEC representatives as well as heads of key offices. At this point Kissinger invited each member to present at the next meeting his needs for communicating within his own agency the actions of the Review Group. It was also agreed that the Secretary of the Review Group, presently Morton Halperin, would distribute minutes of the meetings which could be used as a basis for briefing within the separate agencies.

4. This organizational discussion was followed by a discussion of the paper on Non-Proliferation Treaty. This was a crisp substantive discussion during the course of which a number of the descriptions of pros and cons underlying key issues were modified. A revised draft was to be circulated to the members on the following day for coordination. Early in the following week the paper is to be distributed to the NSC members as a basis for discussion at the next meeting.

R. J. Smith

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Deputy Director for Intelligence

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